



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

of value. But are we so sure of what is the most truly practical? Modern civilization increases our needs and diminishes our contentment; year by year we get further away from nature; culture does not keep pace with material progress, and moral and spiritual advance, if anything, lags still farther behind. This is hardly practical, at any rate if the true happiness of man is dependent upon harmonious development, and if the teaching of the greatest of mankind in East and West is held to be practical.

The doctrine of reincarnation, in its highest aspect, looks to a social end and not to the consummation of an isolated perfection. It is not to be thought that the individual soul has to acquire all arts and sciences, capacities and abilities, or pass through all experiences; the part cannot possibly perform the function of the whole. But what the wise soul can do is to develop that all-attractive power of harmlessness, and that positive power of fellow-feeling, of sympathy and compassion for all other souls and the whole creation, which are the passports to the adytum of every separated life and of life itself; till finally all separation is removed and the treasures of experience and capacity, knowledge and attainment, of all separated souls and of the soul of life itself are laid at the feet of the eternal victor who is also the perpetual self-sacrifice.

G. R. S. MEAD.

LONDON.

THE ESSENCE OF TRAGEDY.

HORACE M. KALLEN.

PLATO, at the end of the "Symposium," represents Socrates as forcing Aristophanes and Agathon to admit that the genius of comedy is the same with that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy is an artist in comedy also. The suggestion is tantalizing. Plato

discusses tragedy elsewhere,—its purpose to gratify audiences, the mixed character of the feelings it rouses, its place in the economy of the ideal state,—but nowhere again does he touch upon the hint in the *Symposium*, nowhere develop its implications or draw the necessary conclusions concerning the essence of the tragic. Intent on the coördination of excellences and the definition of the Highest Good, his interest in essence was subordinate to his interest in the essence of value, and he found the arts too immoral in function to pay much attention to their right nature. Thus it is to Aristotle that the doubtful distinction belongs of being the foremost 'esthetician,' the only one, indeed, of the ancient world, and the master of those critics who maintain the classic canons of art in the modern world. Being engaged less with morals than with nature, his empirical methods and his objective definitions made possible the formulation of the standards and descriptions of poetry without any reference to its significance for life. In consequence, where Plato was so much interested in the Highest Good that he lost all sense of the independent objectivity of good things, Aristotle was so much interested in each thing apart, including the Highest Good, that his sense of their interconnection is not obviously clear or strong. Hence, his definition of tragedy is a definition of the tragedy of Greek letters; he is concerned with the tragic institution, the playhouse and the drama, not with the world and human existence: tragedy is for him no more than an imitation, which he finds the best practice of the Hellenic stage to make, of an "action that is serious and complete, and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, . . . in the form of action not of narrative, through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of those emotions." This, obviously enough, is, if we except the function of *katharsis*, a close characterization of Athenian serious drama; and the further specifications which the "Poetics" offers are no less faithful to the norm of the Attic stage: the character of the hero,

the unities of time, place, and story,—with respect to all these, description is legislation. Succinct, concrete, objective, possessed of the dry and firm flavor of reality, the very unpretentiousness of this summary of a local practice gripped the critical imagination, and became the authoritative norm for tragedy throughout Europe. It still remains fundamental. Although it was irrelevant to the practice of the ages, the religious and practical needs of the changing times giving rise to a new stage and a completely diverse dramatic tradition, although Marlowe and Shakespeare, Calderon and Lope created a new genus of tragedy, even English usage of Elizabeth's day sought the sanction of Aristotle and proclaimed his laws of tragedy eternally infallible, while his domination of the tragic stage of France was, in its classic prime, utter. Not until the gathering power of romantic feeling broke through the shell of eighteenth-century rationalism was it considered that the great tragic poets might not have been mere bunglers, too ignorant and unskilfull to make use of Aristotle's laws, but men of genius empowered to legislate and execute in their own right. Then a new definition of tragedy arose, envisaging the essential characters of modern European tradition, and in its turn giving the law, without relevancy to the changing practice of the times, to tragic art. There is a curious inversion in this fact that is itself not untragic: both classic and modern drama have their source in religious needs. Both begin as mysteries, the one of Dionysus, the other of Christ. But the mystery of self-asserting Dionysus grew into the tragedy of negation we call fate-tragedy, and the mystery of atoning Christ has grown into the tragedy of affirmation we call tragedy of character. The one is lawful and orderly and classic; the essence of the other is to assert rebellion and barbarous vitality, to be romantic. And in the theory, what Aristotle is to the classic tradition, that romanticism is to the Christian. Among theorists of tragedy there have been Aristotelians and Romanticists, no others.

The spirit of romanticism is the spirit of adventure. It is self-centered, assured, irresponsible, eager, and spontaneous. Its pride of self is colossal, it thinks in worlds and universes, it acts as if it were God, it has no law but its own caprices, it breeds its freedom from its needs. It is nothing if not visionary and fanciful, madly so; but when its vision is coincident with reality, it reaches, by way of compensation, deeper into the heart of it and grasps more firmly the nature it sees. Such is the case with its account of tragedy. There, where classicism is formal, it is personal; where classicism is empirical, it is metaphysical. Based, no less than the Aristotelian account, on the tragedy of letters, it succeeds, nevertheless, in getting somewhat closer to the tragedy of life itself. Indeed, it aims to envisage nothing less, for romantic theories of tragedy assign to the elements of the drama a categorical nature and universal scope. This nature is disharmony, conflict at the core of being. But though the core, this conflict is not intrinsic, not permanent; rather is it incidental and transitive, a step in the self-realization of a metaphysical will. Transcendental peace broods always beyond: freedom *is* necessity, law *is* caprice. Thus, according to Schelling, tragedy portrays the conversion, in the course of their proper growth, of the stubbornness and lawlessness of raging and inimical passions, into a horrible necessity; the poet's spirit, all the while, resting in the midst of it like a silent, lovely, shining light, the unmoved subject in the weighty movement, the wise foresight which resolves the most oppugnant discords into satisfying harmonies.¹ Hegel sees in tragedy the reconstitution of the unity of the moral substance by an act of eternal justice which destroys the disturbing individuality;² Vischer, an image of the disappearance of every finite and human limitation before the infinite and absolute perfection, besides which finitude is sinful. The rôle of sin, indeed, is enormous in the

¹ Works, I, 118.

² "Aesthetics," III, 530.

romantic view of tragedy, but it is not religious gracelessness, it is metaphysical evil. For some it is identical with wilfullness, caprice, at war with universal necessity, and defeated by being absorbed in the over-individual.³ For others it is mere finitude, arrogating to itself the lordliness of the infinite and paying, by its tragedy, the price of arrogance,⁴ while for others still it is the necessary restraint of the individual will by its peers, all at war with each other, and all reduced in tragedy to absurdity, by the outspanning cosmic purpose. Sin is difference, 'otherness,' variation from type. Tragedy is the conflict between the typical and the individual, the former being good, the latter evil. Tragedy consists, according to Hebbel, of the representation of this conflict. The individual's passions, which oppose him to the ideal, of their own force turn into instances of domination of the moral law, and the tragic pain has its seat in this conversion.⁵

The same romantic sense of the cosmic scope of tragedy marks the disillusion of Schopenhauer and the Darwinian optimism of Nietzsche. To the former tragedy is the exposure of the worthlessness of life, its content is the horrible, the sorrow of man, and the triumph of evil. "It is a conflict of the will with itself, which here, at the highest degree of objectivity, fully explicated, reveals its terrible nature, becoming visible in the sorrows of man."⁶ The inward discrepancy makes the will seem both strong and weak, and it can have no pause until it ceases to love life. Its sin is its mere existence, its salvation is death, so that it is the tragic victim who conquers, not the overawing law. Nietzsche, trying to understand tragedy in terms of an interpretation of its origins, tells the same story with a different moral.⁷ The *Ursein*, overfilled with its own vitality, becomes unrestful, and creates the individual for its assuagement. When, under the stress of

³ Cf. Solger, "Vorlesungen über Ästhetik," 309.

⁴ Cf. Th. Ziegler, "Das Gefühl," 138, and L. Ziegler, "Zur Metaphysik der Tragödie," 55. ⁵ Hebbel, Works, 43, x.

⁶ "World as Will and Idea," I, § 51.

⁷ "Geburt der Tragödie."

Dionysian music, the tragic poet reproduces these creative birthpangs of God, he gives rise thereby to the Apollonic easing. In this way tragedy reveals our own nature to us: we are visions of the Lord, celestial dissonances that must necessarily be resolved in the tragic death which is no more than the individual's reunion with the *Ursein*. Later, when the evolutionary ideal of the superman had obsessed him, Nietzsche laid more emphasis on the glory of the tragic conflict in itself. Not resolution, but the eternity of dissonance became his concern, and he therefore began to see in tragedy a rendering of courage and the spontaneity of emotion before a powerful enemy, a horror, a sublime undoing. Now it is our victory, not our defeat, that the tragic poet selects and ennobles. "Before tragedy the warrior in us celebrates his *Saturnalia*."⁸

If we take such analyses at their face value, the difference between the classic and the romantic theories of tragedy lies in the classic sobriety of statement and its emphasis on form, the unities, and embellishments, in the ordering of the content rather than in the content as such. For both, the tragic essence is action or struggle, and the one finds its formal, the other its material nature to be of supreme importance. Both tend to insist on the lofty station and nobility of the tragic protagonist, but classicism finds his misfortune to be largely unmerited; romanticism sees it as the outcome of metaphysical sin. Both find an irrevocable finality in the tragic conclusion, for both it is as the "Sire, Zeus, willed it long ago," for both there is the peace that lies beyond. But to the classicist this peace is the fruit of katharsis, conceived, perhaps, physiologically⁹ and naturally, while for the romanticist it is the peace that passeth all understanding. But from the romantic standpoint the struggle is cosmic, hence its essence appears in *any* struggle, and the peace may ensue upon any sad event. As Lipps says, the protagonist may be a morally poor and bad man. It is the imperative

⁸ Works, VIII, 136.

⁹ Cf. The discussion of music in the "Polities" of Aristotle.

and categorical nature of his misfortune that constitutes his tragic nobility, not the nobility his misfortune. In the tragedy of the playhouse, of course, the nobility of the protagonist is that of the classic drama: he *is* a king, not in virtue of his unhappiness, and most of the romantic theories had in mind the Attic models of romantic dramas. Nevertheless, the vision of romanticism is truer to all of the facts, for it can readily envisage the tragedy of the daily life, where the conflict is essential and the station of protagonist unimportant.

Even so, however, can it be said to apprehend the right essence of all tragedy more truly than the classic theory? Do both together? What, in the light of them, shall we make of that pregnant hint of Socrates concerning the identity of the genius of tragedy with that of comedy? Or of the remark of Ibsen to the effect that contradiction, namely, "the contradiction between power and effort, will and possibility, constitute the tragedy and *also the comedy* of the race and the individual?"¹⁰ In point of fact, in their emphasis on conflict, or on form, or on nobility of character, these theories have not grasped the distinctive essence of tragedy. What they say of it may be said of comedy also. For the comic, the ludicrous, is also not a rest, is also an action and developing process, having also a title to unities and embellishments. It, too, is a disharmony whose wholeness is the wholeness of a flicker. In it, too, something is lost or destroyed. But significantly, what is destroyed is not a thing of worth: the progression of the comic theme alters the relations of its elements, gradually eliminates the evil which fathers the unrest, leads to the peace beyond, and in so doing enhances the valuable and confirms the stability of what is precious. The comic conflict tends invariably to resolve into the adequate harmony of beauty; in it evil yields to the supremacy of excellence, and it is susceptible to the same metaphysical and romantic signifi-

¹⁰ Foreword to "Catalina," 2d ed. Italics mine.

cances usually invoked for tragedy, and yields no less than tragedy, a purgation.¹¹ If this be true, then there is no difference between comedy and tragedy with respect either to material or to scope of movement. The subject-matter of both is essentially one. What moves one man merrily will move another tearfully; it may be comic and tragic to the same mind at different times and to different minds at the same time. The daily life offers no occasion that cannot sustain these inverse relations; art holds innumerable examples of such objects. Once madness, intoxication, greed, personal deformity were comic; to-day they are tragic. The comic character is often lofty, his misfortunes are frequently unmerited. Alceste in "Le Misanthrope," Celia and Bonario in "Volpone," Orlando in "As You Like It," Hermione in "A Winter's Tale," and innumerable others are in and of themselves no less worthy the buskin than the sock. Nor is the tragic conflict of greater categorical import than the comic; for the opposition of society and the individual, law and caprice, nature and convention, the temporal and the eternal, are comic oppositions no less the tragic. And the great passions,—egoism, avarice, hypocrisy, jealousy, ambition, stupidity, conceit, love, treachery,—are they less effective engines of events in one than in the other? Nothing, perhaps, is so free as the interchange of the two sentiments, tragic and comic. It is the significance that alters, not the object. "Titus Andronicus," full of horrors, once a potent tragedy, is now ludicrous through just this replete intensity of horror. Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy," written to be a great purge of the soul by pity and terror, now tends to evoke only our laughter. "The Merchant of Venice," intended to split the ears of the groundlings with laughter, is now a tragedy moving our tears and consideration, while it is not unlikely that the whole heroic stage of the Restoration would awaken only derision. Moreover, there are

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the comic cf. *American Journal of Psychology*, April, 1911: "The Aesthetic Principle in Comedy," by H. M. Kallen.

border-plays, just as there are border events in the daily life, which leave us uncertain whether to laugh or weep, in which the tragic and the comic sentiments pass into each other as rendering mood, situation,—in a word, the mind's valuation of the event,—may determine. Such dramas are Molière's "Misanthrope," which Goethe called a tragedy, his "Tartuffe" and "George Dandin." Such are Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure," "All's Well that Ends Well," "A Winter's Tale," and "Much Ado." Such are Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People" and "Little Eyolf." And these are only notable and obvious instances: ultimately there is nothing in experience or in literature that cannot, as the occasion is served, move to laughter or to tears. Altogether, the mechanism and structure of the comic plot is the same as that of the tragic plot, even according to the Aristotelian analysis. Both involve specific conflicts, disharmonies brought to pass by recognition, exposures, inversions, repetitions, and so on. Whatever that is human and contains the dramatic essence of the comic by that fact contains the same essence of the tragic,—let it be deformity of person or of character, cancers of body or spirit, let them appear singly or combined into groups, systems and progressions, they with indifferent immediacy constitute the tragic optimum, or the comic. Not a detail of the one that cannot become the substance of the other without a change in nature. Where then does the constitutive alternation come?

Consider so commonplace a comic event as Mr. Pickwick in pursuit of his hat. Is his situation truly comic to him? Does he or can he stand outside it, the joyous spectator of the mutual defeat and destruction of elements in his environment which were menacing, potential of evil? Clearly not. Even his initial laughter (if he be moved to it) is unfree and therefore not truly the voice of the comic sentiment. For it has an instrumental intent; it is meant to ward off the pain of the greater derision from the watching crowd, which anger or bad

temper would evoke. It does not endure, this initial laughter, inasmuch as its source cannot remain the serene beholder of his own undoing, nor can his mirth be honestly directed upon his present state. In his eyes the pursuit of his hat is an urgent and serious business, and as it prolongs, passes from seriousness to sadness and from sadness to tragedy. By it the even course of his life has been broken, its proper balance destroyed and the flow of his interests deployed from its right channel. The hat-hunt is a node and vortex of cross-purposes, arrested progress, and its prosecution involves at the same time neglect of the right and good and the pursuit of them; it is an attempt to restore these excellences to their pristine status. Further, for the permanence of this status, in a society where headgear is important, the right disposition of the hat is fundamental, propriety in dress being there a human interest and value which is in many respects the base and underpinning of innumerable more and important and higher interests. The very triviality and obvious ridiculousness of the instance must make clear how near together laughter and sorrow do lie. To violate this apparently insignificant interest of propriety is to throw the others out of gear, to upset a system or scheme of values. The chance wind, then, in carrying off a man's hat, makes him the victim of such an upheaval and loosens his grasp upon life and power. In his struggle to regain his hat he is in toils of evil, and he is thereby a tragic figure. Tragic because the doom which ordains him here to maladjustment, or defeat, or destruction, is his own nature. It is the inexorable and spontaneous necessity of living which compels him to pursue his lost good, to restore the upset equilibrium, to conserve the threatened value. If it be possible for the man to go freely on his way without his headgear, he can never figure as tragic, nor as comic either. As it is, his plans and arbitrariness of fate or chance being oppugnant, his expectations are disappointed, his aims missed, the worth and inward dignity

of his life set at naught. And all this is to the beholder comic and yields him self-sufficiency and pleasure. But to the man himself, can it be anything but an increasingly terrible insufficiency and horror, rendering him tragic? And if this be the ready menace of so insignificant an incident as a hat-hunt, how much greater must be the tragedy in the more meaningful events of experience. For our hatless citizen there is a world out of joint whose cursed spite requires him to set it right.

“The world,” says Horace Walpole, “is a comedy for those who think and a tragedy for those who feel.” It is the same world, but it feeds the proper vitality of the one, and he laughs and grows fat, while it consumes that of the other, and he dies. Valuation is what makes tragedy. And it is for this reason that comedy is tragedy, tragedy comedy, seen the other way. If comedy involves detachment, tragedy requires attachment. Where comedy supplies superiority, tragedy demands loyalty, where comedy begins with menace, the beginning of tragedy is beauty. Comedy annihilates the rival, tragedy destroys the beloved. For every loyalty, every appreciation or attachment, all love, is, as we know, but the interweaving of value-relations by whose virtue objects get each its peculiar excellence. This excellence may be the direct and self-sufficient one of beauty; it may have the indirect character of instrumentality, mechanical or ethical, being good in respect to its uses rather than in its own right, or it may be possessed of the high and full dignity of the harmony of the two. But if there is to be tragedy, it must exist, and in some one of this triad of forms. Where there are no values, there can be no interests and no tragedy. That can arise only where a thing precious and cherished is involved in ruin: a thing dear to the soul, its care and joy. Whatever other characteristics tragedy may have, its prime essential is the destruction of value, and from that all the others derive.

That this should be so is implied in the nature of value itself. Being of the very essence of consciousness, the

core of humanity, its disintegration must proceed through a human center, and tragedy of the unhuman is possible only as a secondary and symbolic fact, humanized by the infection of the human preference. This does not mean, as Lipps would have us think, that the tragic sentiment is *Mitleid*, sympathy or pity, or that it is value of the highest type, being the feeling of the worth of man. Nor does it mean that its excellence resides in the painfully sublime participation in the inmost life of another through the medium of his difficulties.¹² My meaning is rather the other way. Pain is exactly what does not lead to personality, it is personality that leads to pain. For an instance, consider again the relation of the onlooker to the hat-chasing victim of the wind. If the two are strangers utterly, if they do not obviously meet on any one excellence, each feels the other as somehow a menace to his own integrity of being. The stranger within the gate is ever in need of protection; "who is not for me is against me" seems to be the operative though unacknowledged rule of conduct of our gregarious world. The stranger's misfortune is sooner if not immediately felt as an excellence,—as the frustration of a potential menace, and this feeling's overt symbol is laughter. But if, on the other hand, two are not strangers; if, although for an instant only, an interest of each touches and strengthens the other's; then the hat-hunt becomes the spectator's tragedy also. He participates in the ruin: a value of his, however petty, is for the moment in jeopardy of its existence through the hat's mischance. That value may reside in the intrinsic character of the victim himself, in his appearance merely, in his affairs, in any one of the complexity of interests that make up our lives. Once given and endangered, tragedy arises, excellence becoming transmuted to turpitude, goodness falling into the toils of evil. Now there are non-human conflicts and disharmonies also, there are

¹² For Lipps's view of. tragedy, cf. *Aesthetics*, I, 565:

discords of color, cacophonies of sound, natural cataclysms, misfortunes of animals, metaphysical evil, which are readily objects of laughter: but contents of the tragic sentiments they can become only by virtue of the 'pathetic fallacy.' Some form of value,—in a word, some attribute or *quale* of consciousness or personality must attach to them, be involved or shattered in their fall, and their ruin must in so far forth drag the spectator down with it. In some one respect it must be his ruin, his unhappy destiny.

Since the field of excellence is narrower than experience, the menace of existence being at least so pervasive as its joy, tragedy has a scope more limited than comedy. The tragic spirit lives by the misfortunes of man alone; the muse of comedy is nourished on all disharmonies. Tragedy, as an art, does not reach out to the residual world, but stays at home in the human heart. Whatever has figured as tragic, from God to stocks and stones, has been so only by its propitious bearing on some human interest, and has sucked its tragic import from that. Until very recently there have been no attempts at tragedies of beasts and things, and such experiments as had been made were foredoomed to failure. The material whereon we feed and live can be of itself comic, but it cannot of itself be tragic. To achieve tragedy it needs to be raised to man's estate, made to care for the same things and to cherish the same values. Then, however, it is no longer tragic in its own right but vicariously, as Chanticleer may be, or the birds and beasts of *Æsop*, or the animal gods of the mythologists. Tragic in its own right only mankind can be, and all else is an image and a symbol merely, not a real life, the peer of man's.

But because the prime fact of valuation narrows the field of the tragic to humanity, it does not limit the sentiment to those classes of mankind defined by both the classic and romantic theories of tragedy. If in the tragic conflict the very core of life is thrust at, if it is value as

such that is there gaged, it is value uninformed by any object, independent of any condition, caste, or station. Now bare value, so taken, is fundamental, is that direct excellence, intrinsic, immediate, self-sufficient, we have learned to know as beauty, so that beauty becomes the chief desideratum in tragedy. Here would seem to arise one of those paradoxes dear to romanticism,—the limited becoming unlimited, the relative absolute, and so on to the end. At least, there seems to be a contradiction: the tragic object must be beautiful, yet must belong to no special human group. What of ugly humanity? Does not that make a difference and could not comedy and tragedy be distinguished, after classicism, with reference to ugliness and beauty? Comedy, Aristotle tells us, is of the nature of the ugly, but tragedy must be adorned with every artistic ornament and its characters must be kingly. On the contrary, modern insight, of which the moral disillusionments of Christianity and the spontaneous democracy of romanticism are a dominant spiritual background, has ceased to find tragedy only where ornament is pervasive and station significant. It is valuation that constitutes beauty, and that beauty need be unmixed still needs to be proved. Ugliness is endured, as we shall see, and even cherished for the sake of the value it lives with. Again as Lipp says,¹⁸ and again, for another reason, morally poor and bad men may be tragic protagonists, men without station, dignity, or worth, but loving life and seeking to conserve it. Let alone the domestic tragedy of the English stage, there are also truly sordid tragedies, like those of Hauptmann, where the splendor of destruction is nil, the embellishment lacking, the nobility of the victim unrevealed. In them no magnificent recollections of bygone days wait upon death, no hells loom, no gods curse, no hosts of angels sing to rest; the evil event comes un beautified and passes unembellished, the tragic figure has neither high station nor ex-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 566.

ceeding virtue. It is the figure of the daily life, with all its dreariness, with all its imperfections, but with its essential value,—with its *life*. It is the figure of the daily life given, in an enhanced degree, the beauty which is life, the joy proper to being, to the maintenance of interests, the pursuit and participation in ideals. However commonplace and routinal it be, it becomes tragic when any of its positive values, wherever sustained and from whatever social reach declining, grips in its passing the onlooker's heart, and so, by becoming his own, carries him along to destruction. Neither fear nor pity nor heroic guilt nor embellishment nor station are, then, at the base of tragedy. At the base of tragedy is the goodness of mere life, expressed in the simplest of all values, beauty.

Hence, limited though it be, the tragic field has widened since Aristotle's day. From kings it has spread to all mankind, from a few values, given in religion or the more vivid taboos of a dearly gained morality, such as made Pentheus and Œdipus tragic figures, it has spread to all the values that men cherish and lose, whether through their own natures or the brute onsweep of the flux. The 'gravity and greatness' of the tragic career is no longer the gravity and greatness of the convention of implicated gods and suffering heroes. There may be tragedy in the fall of the sparrow, if there are men who love sparrows. Tragic significance now rests in intent purely as it lives in the moment of perception, and is identical with beauty as we have learned to know it, at its basest and simplest, the naked funamentum of value. This, the soul of all our interests and acolyte of every excellence, attaches us spontaneously to an object in the flux, and raises it to the region of the spirit and sustains it there. The object need only be selected or found. Beyond that it may be companioned by a horde of evils, born of evil, dependent on evil, and for its goodness's sake these will be not only endured but also sustained and cherished. The infection of its excellence

will overcome the very horror that may surround and feed it, and turn all to good. Thus, however great the turpitude and sinfulness may be, however ineradicable save by annihilation, its destruction will, by virtue of the good it lives with, be also tragedy. Such destructions are those of Macbeth and his lady, of King John, of Richard III, of Werner. Camille, Iris, Paula Tangueray, Rosa Bernd are considered no less tragic than Cordelia and Desdemona. Thérèse Raquin and Hannele are found as worthy of the buskin as Antigone or Iphi-genia. For the intrinsic dignity of life, the slum is as worthy as the palace; millhands, spinners, thieves, are as excellent in their proper natures as captains and lords. Indeed, what, in the old tragedies the gods were to the heroes, that the upper classes are now recognized to be often to the lower. In plays like Tolstoi's "The Powers of Darkness," Sudermann's "Die Ehre," Hauptmann's "Die Weber," moreover, the groups as such are the protagonists, and individuals are merely background. Nor is the 'law' or the 'god' always vindicated now, or the individual invariably resolved into the universal. The tragic object may be the god or the law or the universal itself. This is so in "Ghosts," where a time-honored convention of human mating is destroyed; in "A Doll's House," where the obligation of family life and duty lies dismembered and bleeding. In a word, the tragic sentiment has been liberated, and will attach itself to any excellence of life whatever, involved in disharmony and going down to destruction.

The classic drama itself furnishes examples of how natural and inevitable this is. Indeed, it is only an accident of history that this extension of the tragic field did not occur a thousand years ago. It requires no more than the development of implicit attitudes of the chorus or of the protagonists of the Attic stage. A notable instance occurs in Euripides's "Bacchæ." Cadmus has been bemoaning his unhappy fate and the leader of the chorus replies:

Lo, I weep with thee. 'Twas but due reward
God sent on Pentheus; but for thee. . . . 'Tis hard.¹⁴

The admission of Dionysian justice is pitying, grudging. The speaker is expressing two conflicting sentiments, loyalty to the god and pity for Cadmus. Suppose, however, that Euripides had been even more Platonic in his treatment of the divine immoralities. He might then have thrown the whole force of interest on Pentheus and Cadmus, even for the Dionysian choir, and instead of justice, the speaker of these verses might have seen immorality and horror in the god's revenge. On the other hand, the relation of the comic sentiment to the tragic is no less pregnantly implicit in this passage. For Euripides might easily have maintained the initial joy of revenge and triumph which the prophetic chorus expresses, instead of permitting it to lapse so humanly. Pentheus was outraging their beloved gods; his failure and his fate could easily have been laughed at rather than sighed over, and if he had succeeded in his blasphemous designs, not he but Dionysus would have been the tragic hero. Similarly, in the Sophoclean version of Prometheus, to those to whom Zeus was more important and of greater excellence than the Titan the tragedy must have been Zeus's. And in our time the death of Macbeth is to many more painful than the death of Duncan, and the fate of Beatrice Cenci's father than her own. To multiply examples would be superfluous. It is the destruction of value that primarily constitutes tragedy.

This cannot, however, be the whole story. The tragic sentiment is a complex one, and alone the destruction of value would give rise to horror, hardly anything more. True horror is not, however, a constituent of the sentiment. This is predominantly pleasant, luminous and calm rather than passionate and turgid, and with all the attachment and suffering, it leaves the soul somehow detached, free, even if subdued. That there are tragedies

¹⁴ Translation by Gilbert Murray, p. 150.

that do not involve this fulness of the tragic sentiment, that are valued only in terms of pity and terror, or even of terror alone, is not disputed. That whole group of dramas called 'tragedies of fate' may belong to this class. The horror of *OEdipus*, the inevitable but needless deaths of *Romeo and Juliet*, the suicide of *Phædra* and the killing of *Hippolytus*, the fates of *Othello* and *Desdemona*, may be held to be the fruits of evil purely, utter reversals of values, spanned by horror. In the course of the daily life they would be paralleled by the fearful accidents,—children under wheels, the ruin of shipwreck, the rack of earthquakes. The evil in them would be just the brute irrationality of being, the heedlessness and inadvertence of the flux. Whatever positive excellence is apprehended together with such misfortunes resides not in the fearful content as such, but in other and not altogether relevant excellences,—the proper embellishments of tragedy. The tragedies of fate are really not so simple, and most of them do exemplify the tragic sentiment. This, with its mixture of positive and negative values, pleasantness and unpleasantness, can rightly attach to nothing but the event itself, its development and culmination, not its extraneousities. If tragedies of fate are truly objects of the tragic sentiment, they necessarily involve more in their content than their theory envisages. The sentiment is, as Lipps thinks,¹⁵ a unique and single emotion, although its positive character is not intensified by its negative complement, nor does it appear to be derived from the apprehension of the inmost depths of humanity through suffering. A mood, it makes no judgments of kind or class; it requires only that the object it defines shall be involved in some cataclysm of value. But what else is necessary in the nature of the cataclysm to render it completely tragic?

The thing needful is that also the destroyer shall be an excellence.

¹⁵ *Aesthetics*, II, pp. 572-3.

The right essence of tragedy lies not in the demolition of value merely, but in the destruction of value by value. Its movement is a conflict of values, its culmination is the victory of one of them. The hero and his enemy, whether in the tragedy of fate or of character, must be equally good if the tragic sentiment is to constitute them tragic figures. The verse already quoted from the *Bacchæ* is a consummate expression of this sentiment:

Lo, I weep with thee. 'Twas but due reward
God sent on Pentheus; but for thee. . . . 'Tis hard.

And in Macbeth's response to the announcement of his wife's death it sounds the depths:

SEYTON—The queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH—She should have died hereafter:

There would have been a time for such a word;
To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
Creeps in the petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

In both these instances, there is, it will be seen, a pause in the movement of events, a sort of peace, that comes with culmination. The battle and the breathlessness is done; the fever and the fret are at an end; only the fruit remains, a sorrow and a consolation in one. To the Bacchanal the supreme excellence has been the honor of Dionysus; that she lived by, that it was her interest to sustain and to glorify. She has found, however, in the aged Cadmus another excellence; his lamentations have moved her, his loss has become her loss, his tears her tears. Pentheus, the last of the Cadmean race, the old man's champion and his friend, has also become some-

thing to sustain and cherish. But Pentheus is gone irretrievably. The world could not hold together him and Dionysus; one or the other must be the victim of the tragic conflict. All this the Bacchanal recognizes and envisages in her last speech,—an excellence has been destroyed, a star has fallen, but it had to be; and there remains the residual good,—God's justice which by destroying the man, preserved itself. So compounded also is the sentiment of Macbeth. Busied with his preparations for the approaching battle, requiring hopefulness and abundance of life, he receives instead a message of death. His instantaneous response thereto is one of rebellion and suffering: it is an untimely death. But over against this sense of disharmony and loss rises the other consideration of the emptiness and vanity of that which he so much lacks and regrets. Life, more life, indispensable for the purpose in hand, in itself not worth the living! Evil and good are inextricably commingled, and the one is born of the other. "Out, out, brief, candle!"

Tragedy exists wherever goodness is at war with goodness, nobility with nobility, truth with truth, in battle for a mere place in existence, a battle which both cannot survive. "Das Gute selbst kann Feind des Guten sein, die Rose kann die Lilie verdrängen wollen; beide sind existenzberechtigt, aber nur eines hat Existenz."¹⁶ Such conflicts arise everywhere, and are the constituent matter of the whole drama of human life. They are the fabric of the mind of man, so that every moral nature has its roots in the tragic essence. For mind, as we have learned, is an arrangement or system of interests, each accommodated to the other, and in the accommodation, some are crippled, some are dwarfed, some are completely annihilated that the whole may be. Yet in the way of being, each value in itself is as validly entitled to a freehold in existence as any other, each is as possible and autonomous a happiness, if it come to fruition. In the freest and

¹⁶ Hebbel, "Tagebuch," 7 Dez., 1839.

most excellent life, where no environment would constrain, no pain contradict and demolish, each, in reaching its proper perfection, would enrich and deepen the harmony of its peers, while they in their turn would support the individual interest. But the mind is a conflict more than a harmony. In the flux and strain of living, the autonomy of existence and freedom for perfection that are spontaneously proper to each interest must give way to the domination of law. That many may be, one at least must pay. So only can the moral economy be maintained; but the moral economy so maintained, is implicit tragedy. Every choice is a destruction of value by value. The soul, it seems, must, in her housekeeping, waste to save, and what she wastes is initially as costly, as precious, as desirable as what she keeps. Indeed, the very freedom which is granted her in the existence of alternative excellences to choose between is the ground of her tragedy. Where there is none, where there are only uniformity, fate, 'overarching purpose,' and the difference and spontaneity are lacking or unreal, there can be no struggle and no tragedy. Growth in liberty, the enfranchisement of values as they rise in all men, means growth in tragic power. For this reason tragedy, in no less profound a sense than comedy, attends civilization, which is the liberation of the human spirit. For these reasons these converse values melt, in the development of the dramatic arts, one into the other, to merge into the neutrality of humor, the clearly diverse tragedy and comedy of Sophocles and Aristophanes culminating in the undeterminate and problematic dramas of Ibsen, which are tragic or comic as one chooses.

Tragedy enters the arts whenever any inimical and op-pugnant goods are abstracted from their context in the experiential flux, and the progress of their duel to its culmination is set forth in unmixed purity. How deep-lying and inevitable such conflict is, how far-reaching, how finely woven into the texture of our own lives, the very honor and dignity which mankind apportions the tragic art,

sufficiently attest. And not alone the high dignity of tragedy, but all those traits which criticism has regarded as its essentials, distinguishing it from comedy—reality, categorical force, embellishment. These are, nevertheless, not primary, and if they exist in tragedy, derive from something more fundamental. Upon the fact that the tragic object may at the same time be also comic follows that intrinsically it is not more real as the one than as the other. If, when comic, it seems abstract, unreal, mere ‘personification’ of moral traits,¹⁷ this is because, emptied by virtue of the comic conflict of its own power for evil, it is *felt* as trivial, unimportant, negligible. Its value makes it unreal, the laughter that depreciates it, not its nature. Its value again makes it real, the love or loyalty that cherishes it and renders its endangerment tragic. The mind, by prizing and treasuring an object, whatever its status, endows it with genuineness and import such that it cannot and need not otherwise have, renders it solid, stable, significant. In a word, in comedy the value ensues upon the struggle, feeds upon that, but is not involved in it, while in tragedy it is value itself that is embattled and in danger of destruction.

From this fact springs the notion also of the ‘universality’ of the tragic protagonist, as well as of his reality. There is, in the tragic sentiment, something of finality, of the irrevocable, the fatal and necessary. This is the material of the cosmic resolutions of dissonance, of the absorption into the One, which the romantic interpreters of tragedy are so rich in. But it is born of nothing more than the fact that the tragic duel is between two excellences which cannot endure together. One or the other must be annihilated, and forever. And the poignancy of recognizing this unutterable incompatibility and inevitable bereavement seems no less than universal. It is like the past, which cannot be called back, yet without which we cannot live. If, then, tragedy is categorical and necessary,

¹⁷ Cf. Bergson, “Le Rire.”

the universality and necessity are the fruits of its primary content and its essential 'terror' lies in that. For in that we see evil springing out of the very being of goodness, the love of excellence frustrate by its own nature. Tragedy reveals the subtlety, the pervasiveness, the invincibility of the enemy, "how evil evil is," as Mr. Santayana says, but it is also a tribute to the power of life and preserves intact the domination of goodness. For it is better that one value shall flourish and bear fruit than none at all. What survives the tragic ruin is still a thing to cherish and to love, the more precious for the price it costs.

In sum: the two historic theories of tragedy, the classic and the romantic, do not succeed in supplying a definite criterion of its nature. Although both enumerate many of its properties, they fail to distinguish such as will differentiate it from the comic on the one hand, and the horrible, on the other. With respect to singleness and unity of action, to purgative effect (even through such emotions as pity and terror), to subject-matter, to the passions and motives of protagonists, to the mechanism and structure of plots, comedy is essentially identical with tragedy. The history of literature records tragedies that have become comedies and comedies that have become tragedies, and the daily life teems with events that are tragic to one and comic to another, while dramatic art offers plays that are tragic or comic as the interpretations of the actors and the moods of the audience please. Again, the horrible, which is essentially blinding and turgid, can play no important rôle (to say nothing of being identical with it) in tragedy, inasmuch as the tragic sentiment, subdued and massive though it be, is also speculative and not unquiet.

The reëxamination of the tragic essence to which these considerations lead reveals the fact that the one trait which makes the destruction or pain of an object tragic, not comic, is its *value*, and that its enemy must be equally a value. But value is meaningless except in terms of

mind, whose essence value is. So that only human beings can be tragic and all other things are tragic vicariously. In life and in art, tragedy can exist only where human values are incompatible and cannot live together, one having to go if the other is to stay. From the fact that the tragic object must be valuable, spring the so-called universality of tragedy and the 'reality' of its protagonists. Its high place among the arts, again, is due to the fact that it is more directly representative of the essential movement of mind, which is compelled from moment to moment to choose between incompatible goods. Nevertheless, tragedy represents the victory of life, since it is better to conserve one or a partial excellence than none at all. It is, however, rooted in destruction, and where comedy is the *enrichment*, tragedy is only the *salvage* of life.

The foregoing theory of tragedy may be called pragmatic.

HORACE M. KALLEN.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

LIBERALISM AND ORTHODOXY.

GEORGE ALEXANDER BARROW.

AS the number of liberals in the orthodox denominations daily increases, the issue which once seemed so clear is in danger of becoming confused. In the early days of the liberal movement, the controversy between the old and the new in theology was clear cut. The champions of higher criticism or evolution were known to all to be definitely opposed to the ordinarily received views in theology. But to-day, when many are drifting rather than working toward the new views, there are many intermediate positions. The center, too, of the conflict has changed. Whether from a feeling that debatable matters do not belong to the sphere of practical church adminis-